



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE RED CROSS

IN CHARGE OF

JANE A. DELANO, R.N.

Chairman National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service

EXPERIENCES OF UNIT K. AT VIENNA, AUSTRIA¹

BY LYDA W. ANDERSON, R.N.

A year's work as a Red Cross nurse in Europe during its grim and tremendous war had its hardships, its problems, its disappointments, but no less its gratifications, in incomparably interesting experience, and compensations, likely to be realized more in the future than just now.

The work of the American Mission in Vienna represents very much the work of other units in other countries except, perhaps, Belgium and Servia where the conditions were more grave.

Crossing the border of Austria at midnight, a message reached us assuring us of a welcome and of the deep appreciation of the Austrian government, which was unmistakably manifested to us when we reached their city. The Austrian Red Cross is a strong, well organized association, financially well supported. We were welcomed by its representative at the station, also by Mrs. von Schneller, who remained the Austrian Red Cross representative at our hospital during our entire stay; Mr. Hinckle of the American Embassy; a group of nurses, and a station full of the Vienna populace, those who had not reached the station, bordering the streets as we rode through. After the welcoming speech of Count Traun, the nurses were taken to the *Roten Kreuz Schwester Heim* where we were entertained until our hospital was ready. Why we should not clean and prepare our hospital, since we had come to work, I couldn't see, but the kindly, courteous Austrians could not countenance their American guests being received into an unfinished, unprepared house.

My stay at the nurses' home revealed to me many interesting points in regard to Austrian schools for nurses. Three or four of the leading schools are very much alive to their needs and some progressive steps have been realized since my last visit there four years ago. Though

¹ Condensed from the paper read at the eleventh annual meeting of The American Red Cross, Washington, D. C., December 8, 1915.

they are still struggling with what are to the American schools long-forgotten primitive problems, such as the need of theoretical teaching; systematic training under supervision in hospital wards; the needs of consecutive hours of work and consecutive hours of rest, rather than a continuous twenty-four hour service periodically, the superintendents feel that more superior young women are entering the schools and that the next few years will bring encouraging results. I wonder if there were a single American nurse who, when she left Europe, was not gratefully conscious of her blessings, first as an American woman enjoying privileges and advantages above women of any other country, and secondly as an American nurse, realizing through her thorough and systematic training school, recognition as a professional woman of ability.

The hospitals in Vienna reserved for military use were of two kinds, those under the Kaiser's special patronage, *Kaiserliche und Konigliche Reserve Spital* and those managed by hospital associations, *Vereine Spital*. Every available public building was utilized as a military hospital, and regular hospitals, excepting a few small private institutions, were given over for military use. The *Algemeine Krankenhaus*, a hospital of about six thousand beds, was almost exclusively reserved for the wounded. Our hospital was known as the *K. u. K. Reserve Spital No. 8* and as the American Mission. It was a new cement school building with good plumbing and water supply and lent itself very well to hospital use. We had none of the crude, unorganized unsanitary conditions to deal with that one expects in emergency work. The coming in of the transports gave us the most strenuous work. The railroad stations where the wounded were first received were all under military organization. A corps of volunteer Red Cross workers were in service night and day at these stations; these workers were investigated and accepted at the Red Cross headquarters, upon application. Some had received a six weeks' course in first aid, but those without any special training were received as well. Might I suggest that a branch of Red Cross relief work needing most careful, rather, special organization is the body of volunteer untrained workers? Transports of from one hundred to one thousand wounded would arrive at one station during the night, the patients were fed, urgent needs looked after, classified according to seriousness of condition, and distributed according to this classification to the various hospitals of the city. Transports for our hospital were announced three or four hours before. The gymnasium of the school, situated on the ground floor and opening out into the court, was used as a receiving room. From thirty to one hundred men were received at one time. They were first given

food: hot soup, hot cereal, bread, a small glass of cognac, and the indispensable cigarette. Thousands of cigarettes were consumed daily and such a comfort as these were to the soldier! They were not the injurious cigarettes we preach against, but were prepared from a mild tobacco by the workers in the hospital. Then the cleaning process began. The head was first shaven; soldiers doing their military service on duty at the hospital attended to the undressing. The clothing was immediately dropped into a sack ready for sterilization; men doing this work were protected by linen suits completely covering the body, head and all, similar to a diver's garb.

The wounded were afterwards smeared with a disinfecting salve, robed in a sheet and sent to the next room which had been equipped for bathing, and the scrubbing they received here they will long remember, neither will the nurses forget it soon. Many had not had their clothes off for six, seven and eight months or even had their faces washed in this time. Frozen feet were one of the most lamentable conditions we had to meet. During the campaign in Galicia last winter few escaped and it almost always meant amputation, conditions were so advanced. After the bath they were registered, their wounds dressed, and they were put to bed. We had good, comfortable beds supplied with hair mattresses, linen and warm blankets. To this comfort the poor man succumbed, fell asleep and, unless he had some pain, slept incessantly the first few days in the hospital from sheer exhaustion. To be free from the vermin, with which they were almost always infested to a greater or less degree (they had often rubbed their bodies to a bleeding point) was in itself the greatest relief. The warm furry garments on the dead bodies of the Russian soldiers found on the field were a temptation to the Austrian marching in the cold; but he utilized these to his intense regret, they were invariably alive with vermin. Thousands of crates of germicidal salve, put up in individual tin boxes, were sent from Vienna to the trenches and soldiers begged more for these than for clothes.

The soldiers' diet in the hospital, but for the want of white flour for good wholesome bread, was plentiful and nourishing. The husbandry of food stuffs was more carefully considered as time went on. Bread was issued at bakeries, restaurants and hotels only upon presentation of bread cards. These cards allowed one a week's supply. Flour was obtained in the same way. This law was rigidly enforced. On Tuesdays and Fridays no meat could be purchased. Cream could not be taken from the milk. Peasants harboring their crop of meal were all required to give it in to the general supply for common distribution. Bread lines formed, extending the whole length of the

block, forenoon and afternoon, at the several hundred stations in the city, people waiting hours for their allotment of bread. This was a heavy, black bread made from potato flour, principally, and could be prepared so as to be quite palatable, but when made very cheaply was heavy, black and soggy. Foodstuffs had more than trebled in price during our year in Vienna. With all these depressing, disheartening conditions, suggesting more serious times to come, the poor, whom "they have always with them," *much* poorer, and remembering that there is hardly a family which is not mourning some relative who has fallen, or not been heard of for months, the general atmosphere of Vienna, as well as of the larger cities of Germany—Berlin, Dresden, Munich, is to the casual observer unchanged. Cafés, theaters, public amusement halls are encouraged to promote the good spirits of the people. The buoyancy of the Austrian people does not permit long depression.

Our hospital accommodated three hundred and fifty patients and was almost always fully occupied. The Austrian soldier was a most appreciative, courteous, obedient patient, far superior to the same class of patients in our own public hospitals. The American nurse will never forget this "game" crowd of men, nor question for a moment if it was worth her while to go over to nurse them when she thinks of their heroism, and remembers their sincere, tear-compelling words of gratitude for her services. The saddest time in our hospital was when these men marched out in their crumpled uniforms, a little weak and unsteady, but "fit" for further field service according to the hospital surgeon, brave and uncomplaining. The Austrian soldier accepts the war submissively, as the inevitable, never questioning for what he is fighting, or whether the sacrifice of his precious life is adding to the glory of his country or is fulfilling anything of value to the world. Seeing troop after troop of the best men of the country, as fine as the world has to offer, talented, men of great minds, marching out daily, few to return, and these few maimed and useless citizens, one wondered that it did not stir anarchistic feelings. Nursing the men back to their normal life of usefulness would have given one a joyful satisfaction, but to know that they were made well in order to go out and possibly be destroyed the first day, and the uselessness of it all, one could not permit oneself to think about!

We had about nine different languages to contend with among the patients of our hospital. The German-speaking Austrian, rather the most intelligent of the Austrian subjects, was in the majority, though the Czechs, Bohemians, Bosnians, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians, Italians (South Tyrol), etc., were a little more than one-third of our

number and spoke only the one language. This, however, caused no especial difficulty with us, and they recovered, regardless of it.

Russian prisoners in Austria were very humanely treated. Those not wounded, put to work, labored under better conditions than they had in their own country. The wounded were cared for equally with the Austrians. They, nevertheless, always seemed haunted with fear and apprehension, looking upon all foreigners as their enemies, and accepting all hospital treatment with suspicion, expecting it to be some new form of punishment. Linguists who were willing to act as interpreters, speaking the several languages of the Austrian subjects as well as Russian, were a great comfort to the patients and were most useful to the physicians and nurses.

English and Russian subjects interned in Vienna were given almost perfect freedom to pursue their various occupations and interests so long as they remained law-abiding; the only injunction they were under being to report to the police once a week, giving an account of their goings and comings.

In September, two boxes of supplies came directly to our hospital from America: one from the Pasadena Chapter of the American Red Cross, with surgical supplies prepared ready for sterilization; and one from Mrs. Whitehouse of Manchester, Massachusetts, of rubber goods, underwear, linen, etc., all most acceptable. Both boxes had been undisturbed but had been since the first of April on the way. Supplies of all kinds so much wanted last winter will be much more needed this winter. Some months back they issued a call in Vienna for all the old linen to be used, when frayed into ravelings, as a substitute for absorbent cotton. Housewives were required to give up all copper and brass utensils to be melted and sent to ammunition factories. Some splendid heirlooms, beautiful Russian samovars, oriental urns, etc., were sacrificed. An especially designed iron finger ring worn by anyone signified that this person had thrown a jewel into the coffer and accepted this war decoration instead. Though the needs are yet not calamitous, supplies of all kinds can be used; socks, handkerchiefs, a good leather bedroom slipper for the convalescents in the hospitals, money to be expended for such small luxuries as cigarettes, tobacco, letter paper, postal cards, pencils, pipes.

The intense hatred of England frequently occasioned embarrassment to anyone speaking the English language. The American nurses and doctors were often accosted in public conveyances and told that *nur Deutsch ist erlobt*. These protests did not represent the attitude of the Austrian people generally, but were the expression of a few extremists who held a mistaken idea of patriotism. On a short railway

journey out of Vienna, accompanied by a young Austrian woman, I exchanged with her a few commonplace remarks in English. We were seated in a compartment with four other passengers and all at once found ourselves alone, each one as he left expressing himself most vehemently against anyone speaking this odious language, *unverschämt sein*. Apologies and explanations came to us from the Austrian Red Cross through the Vienna papers with the advice that we always wear the American Red Cross brassards; but this proved later a doubtful protection for, with the feeling becoming quite universal that our country was not neutral, that but for the ammunition furnished the enemies by America the war would long since have ended, and this they firmly believe. It was hard for the common people to distinguish between their open enemies, the English, and their "Machiavelian" neighbor, America.

Of the thoroughness of any system instituted by the German government, there can be no question left in the minds of travelers who have crossed her border the last few weeks. The only thing one can think of, after one has been examined by them, which they might have done, but didn't do, was to apply the X-ray, in order that anything invisible to the naked eye might not escape them. That you have a passport signed and viséd by the governments prescribed, proving you an American citizen on a peaceful and legitimate business, that you are a Red Cross nurse, as proven by "Legitimation" cards, who has given voluntary service to their wounded for a whole year, and who has been decorated for this service by their own government means nothing to the *Revisions Offizier*. The regulations except no one. Your clothes are removed and every garment is examined, for was not one woman just the day before, who had come in with a, presumably, broken arm, found with papers concealed in her bandages? Your body is examined, for in the week past a woman was found with her back tattooed, showing the plan of the army. The soles of your feet are scraped; there is a possibility of papers being plastered there by adhesive. Your toothpaste is squeezed out of the tube, your candy pieces are broken, powder boxes are emptied, etc. You feel when you are through that your very soul has been ransacked, that they know your very thoughts. All papers, books, printed and written matter is held over for more careful reading and is mailed to you later, if you leave the money for postage. If you remain in any German city longer than is necessary to change trains, you are required to report to the police department when you arrive and when you leave, giving a short sketch of your life each time, assuring them of your legitimate business and leaving your finger print. Any war souvenir such as bullets

or anything used in the field by the soldier, maps, diaries, etc., they retain, giving you the promise that they will be sent you after the war. For the civilian they have no regard; he is a trouble to them in their serious business of war.

The effectiveness of the Red Cross organizations in the present war is unquestionable. Every European nation fighting today has an efficient Red Cross society of its own which was mobilized with the army; and this war which is believably barbarous has, on the other hand, been made unbelievably humanitarian by the work of the Red Cross. Its members are at hand on the battle field as soon as the fighting has ceased, skilfully and quickly recovering the wounded before they are barely conscious of their wounds. The men are so promptly cared for that unless the damage calls for a capital operation, they are back in the firing line within a couple of weeks.

From what I could learn, each nation's Red Cross has a somewhat different standing. Russia's society is acknowledged as the most efficient and best organized. Her nurses enrolled become an established sisterhood and are permitted more freedom than Red Cross workers of other nations. Germany's society is absolutely under military control and is more restrained. France is organized more on the plan of the American society, enrolling first all the best-trained nurses. Austria has a good organization but probably wants more efficient and trained workers. Each country's Red Cross will, no doubt, strengthen the weak points of its society after the war, for the "unpreparedness" of this organization is quite equal in importance to the "preparedness" of its army and navy.

On September 29, the American flag was removed from the hospital of the American Mission in Vienna. The hospital remained in operation as the *K. u. K. Reserve Spital No. 8*, Austrian doctors and nurses substituting the Americans. Frieheer von Beck, vice-president of the Austrian Red Cross, in a fitting speech, bade farewell to the Mission, saying:

This war is crushing the old-world culture, shattering the noble ideals of the people; it is the shipwreck of civilization. You, with your banner of Neutrality and Humanity, represent the only humanizing element of this war, and we thank you for this. We join those whom you have healed here in thanks for munificent services.